



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of Maryland*

*Thomas M. DiBiagio
United States Attorney*

*Vickie E. LeDuc
Public Information Officer*

*6625 United States Courthouse
101 West Lombard Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2692*

*410-209-4800
TTY/TDD: 410-962-4462
410-209-4885
FAX 410-962-3091
Vickie.LeDuc@usdoj.gov*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION CONTACT
Vickie LeDuc, AUSA
(410) 209-4885**

**PROJECT BOYS GANG MEMBER SENTENCED
IN VIOLENT DRUG CONSPIRACY**

Baltimore, MD - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced today that United States District Judge J. Frederick Motz sentenced Brian Belton, age 22, of Baltimore, Maryland yesterday to 15 years imprisonment followed by 3 years of supervised release, after Belton pled guilty to conspiracy to possess a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking conspiracy.

According to the statement of facts, from at least 1995 through July 2001, Belton conspired to distribute heroin, cocaine and cocaine base (crack) in East Baltimore with a group of coconspirators sometimes known as the Project Boys or L.A. Boys, as most of the members were originally from the Lafayette Homes Housing Project. Belton and his coconspirators distributed the drugs first in the Lafayette and Douglas Housing projects and later, from the late 1990's through July 2001, in the vicinity of Washington and Lafayette, Lafayette and Chapel and Lafayette and Castle, North Avenue and Washington, in East Baltimore, and in West Baltimore, including drug shops in the vicinity of Pennsylvania and Gold. The organization used and possessed firearms in furtherance of the drug conspiracy.

According to the statement of facts, in the Fall of 2000 a dispute arose between the Project Boys and another east-side drug trafficking group known as the North Avenue Boys. The dispute led to a series of shootings and retaliatory shootings between the rival groups resulting in the deaths of five people, including Keith Hamlet, a member of the North Avenue Boys killed by members of this group on November 11, 2002. To date, ten of the federally indicted defendants have entered guilty pleas, several of whom are pending sentencing in federal court.

This case was investigated by federally deputized detectives from the Baltimore City Police Homicide Unit assigned to the DEA and federal agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Andrew G.W. Norman and John F. Purcell, Jr.